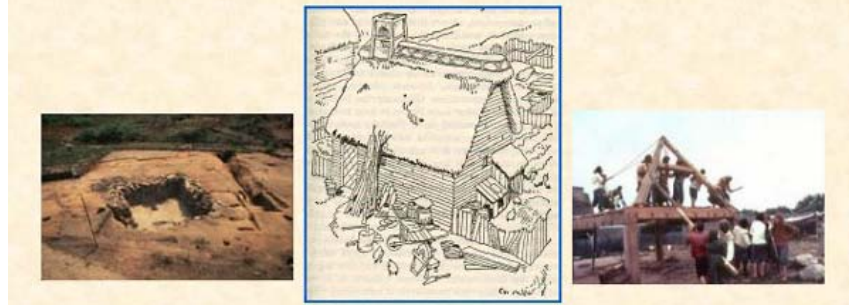


The Plymouth Colony Archive Project



“Harvest Time at the John Howland Homestead, 1650”
Oil on Canvas 22 x 28” By Ruth Major



In early September, 2010, Pilgrim John Howland Society Board Member, Eldon Gay approached President Brad Gorham with an idea to have me paint the John and Elizabeth (Tilley) Howland Homestead, Circa 1650, at Rocky Nook in Kingston MA, then part of Plymouth. Having completed the painting “Plymouth Trade House at Cushnoc, 1628,” I eagerly accepted the John Howland Homestead research and painting project.

Research began for the painting this past September when I traveled to Plymouth from the Vineyard to obtain information from the Jabez Howland House staff. I also went to the Rocky Nook homesite with a compass and camera to document the topography and exact position of John Howland's home on the hill overlooking the sea. For visitors to the homesite, the house faced south as was common at the time, and the foundation lines are still clearly visible as is the stone patio outside the front doorway.

Following the trip, I enlisted the help of archaeologists Derek Wheeler and Craig Chartier, and both men agreed to share their ideas, knowledge of the site, references and expertise on the mid 17th century life in Plymouth. I sent them a list of questions, based on the reading I had done, the trip to the homesite and the information shared by Eldon Gay and the staff at the Jabez Howland House.

Derek Wheeler and his team have done the most recent archaeological work at the John Howland property in Kingston, MA, following an earlier excavation at the site in the 1930s by Sidney T. Strickland and his team. Mr. Wheeler recently wrote, "And while we know that the homestead had to have a barn and other outbuildings, fences, etc., we haven't found them archaeologically yet. I'm totally fine with their addition in the painting as long as we say, 'Only the dwelling house, (size, shape, location, etc.) is based on archaeological evidence.'" The numbers and types of animals, types of crops grown in the fields, gun and gun rest depicted, and the details of some of John's clothing are all based on John's Inventory of his home and belongings found in *The Howlands of America*. Other details may be found in the original 1638 deed from John Jenney to John Howland.

Craig Chartier suggested the nail design in the door, a design element found on other mid 17th century doors in New England, and the chicken coop placed near the chimney outside the Fire Room where the heated stones from the hearth would provide warmth. Lee Cranmer let me know that the shingles were most likely made of cedar, and he described the leaded diamond shaped window panes which were similar to those on the oldest section of the Jabez Howland House. Eldon Gay sent copies of plot plans and photos of Rocky Nook showing the site of the well with Duxbury Hill in the distance and the property line between John Howland and his neighbor John Cooke.

There is evidence from a study of the pottery collected from the home site which reveals that, contrary to what Mr. Strickland believed, Elizabeth *did* have an oven, a North Devon dome oven sent at some point from England. The "clome oven" was identical to those found in Virginia, and would have been placed on the floor of the hearth, according to Craig Chartier. On the upper left side of the painting, you can see **John Jr.** driving the ox cart up Howland Lane with the new North Devon oven for Elizabeth. Information and a photo of a North Devon oven may be seen at Plymoutharch.com.

Following e-mail discussions regarding every aspect of the painting details, and a close study of maps provided by Craig, Eldon and the Jabez Howland House staff, I made a rough drawing that changed daily as new information came in. Karin Goldstein from Plimoth Plantation provided photos of iron hinges, locks and a gun rest as well as information on horses

which she said they believe were brought over in the 1630s and 40s by members of the Mass Bay Colony. Eventually I drew the final drawing on the canvas, sent it out to be critiqued, made a few more adjustments and by October, started the painting.

John and Elizabeth Howland's house was 17' x 33,' with a 22' x 8' addition off the back on the north side with a cellar beneath. There was a loft upstairs where many of the older children presumably slept and dry goods and supplies were stored. Downstairs was the Fire Room or Outward Room off the West end of the house where family and guests were entertained and fed in front of the 9' wide fireplace. There at the hearth, Elizabeth and her daughters baked bread and prepared meals each day for the family. The larger room to the east was called the Inward Room or Bed Chamber and was John and Elizabeth's room, which included John's clothing, stored items and probably had sleeping areas for the youngest children.

Many typical farmstead activities are depicted in this painting. John and Elizabeth Howland and their ten children and 5 grandchildren in 1650 are shown actively involved in domestic and agricultural chores. We see daughters **Lydia** and **Hannah** along with their niece Desire Gorham in the pumpkin patch holding up their favorites for Papa **John Howland** to see upon his return from a hunting trip down by the marsh. Eldest daughter **Desire**, (Captain John Gorham's wife,) rushes down the path to greet her father, with her three youngest children in tow. Daughter **Hope** (then Mrs. John Chipman) tends her infant daughter Elizabeth while she works in the garden. Howland cousins Mary and Martha and daughter **Ruthie** gather fresh vegetables nearby. **Mrs. Elizabeth Howland** watches over her infant son **Isaac** while she kneads bread dough on the bench outside the front doorway. Daughter **Elizabeth** carries buckets of fresh water up the hill (with a pet lamb) from the spring located about 300' northeast of the house. **Jabez** and **Joseph** carry in loads of dry wood to keep the fireplace ablaze.

There was much work to be done on the homestead every day, year round, to feed and house the family, indentured farm hands and numerous farm animals. Judging by John Howland's Inventory items found in the loft storage, fields of Indian corn, wheat, rye and hops were probably grown along with extensive vegetable and herb gardens. Farm animals on the homestead included cows, oxen, horses, sheep, and pigs along with the family dog "Howly." (I added the dog.) Regular activities and tasks not shown included grinding and sharpening of blades and tools, log splitting, drawing water from the well, cleaning, cooking, baking, haying, milking, candle, soap and ink making, laundry, mattress and rug beating, carding, spinning, weaving, dying and sewing.

"Harvest Time at the John Howland Homestead, 1650" is a collaborative effort involving Howland descendant and painter, Ruth Major and archaeologists Derek Wheeler of Thomas Jefferson's Monticello and Craig Chartier of Plymouth Arch, with contributions from Karin Goldstein of Plimoth Plantation, Leon Cranmer, archaeologist for the Cushnoc trading post in Maine and Eldon Gay, Howland Society Board Member. The image that you see above is based on our collective knowledge, archaeological data, reference materials and skills.

Ruth Major
Feb. 15, 2011



Detail from *Harvest Time at the John Howland Homestead, 1650* by Ruth Major. Everyone has a role in working at the homestead.



Detail from *Harvest Time at the John Howland Homestead, 1650* by Ruth Major. John and Howly (the dog) bringing ducks for dinner.

Sources:

The Howlands in America, Edited and Compiled by William Howland for the John Howland Society, Detroit, 1939.

Craig Chartier, Archaeologist, Director, Plymouth Arch. plymoutharch.com.

Derek Wheeler, Research Archaeologist, Thomas Jefferson's Monticello
<http://www.monticello.org/>

<http://www.plymoutharch.com/howland-house-bake-oven/>

Howland Quarterly Editor's Note: Ruth has done a fantastic job in bringing the Howland Homestead to life! Like her previous painting on the Cushnoc Trade House, this will surely be an educational tool for us Howland's (and others) to learn about the lives of our ancestors. Ruth is a diverse artist. You may see more of her outstanding work at: <http://ruthmajor.com/>

This article was originally published in the *Howland Quarterly* Vol. 76, No. 1, 4-6 (March 2011), and reprinted here with permission of the author and the *Howland Quarterly*, Gail Adams, editor.